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Girls and Guns in the Confederacy

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Girls and Guns: Civilian Women and Firearms in the Confederate South

Albany [GA] Patriot, April 18, 1861, p. 1, c. 4

Female Volunteers.--The Holly Spring Herald learns that the county of Chickasaw, Miss., has ten companies of volunteer soldiers ready to be mustered into the service of the State. It adds that, in addition to these:

"The county has a regularly officered and drilled company of young ladies, who have pledged themselves, in the event that the men are called into service, to protect their homes and families during their absence, and see that the farms are properly cultivated, and full crops raised not only for the support of the county, but the army of Mississippi."

Bellville [TX] Countryman, May 22, 1861, p. 3, c. 5

The Goliad Messenger says all persons there, old and young—even including the ladies—are practicing the use of fire arms—therefore Abraham is a gone sucker.

Dallas Herald, May 22, 1861, p. 2, c. 5

The Rusk Enquirer says that a number of young ladies of Cherokee County have formed themselves into a corps of sharpshooters, for rifle practice. At their first practice, they had an effigy of Old Abe, for a target, which they completely riddled with bullets. The Enquirer adds: "Talk about wiping out a people whose women and children are expert rifle and pistol shooters! The idea is absurd."

Dallas Herald, May 22, 1861, p. 4, c. 1

Female Volunteers.—The Holly Springs Herald learns that Chickasaw, Mississippi, has ten companies of volunteer soldiers ready to be mustered into the service of the State. It adds that, in addition to these, the county has a regularly officered and drilled company of young ladies, who have pledged themselves, in the event that the men are called into service, to protect their homes and families during their absence, and see that the farms are properly cultivated, and full crops raised not only for the support of the county, but of the army of Mississippi.

Austin State Gazette, May 25, 1861, p. 3, c. 4

[Mississippi] The Brandon Republican learns from a gentleman from Newton county, that the ladies of Newton Station have formed themselves into a military company and have regular drills.—True Delta.

Savannah [GA] Republican, June 5, 1861, p. 1, c. 1

"Nancy Harts" of LaGrange.—We learned that the ladies of LaGrange, to the number of about forty, organized themselves on Saturday last, into a military corps for the purpose of drilling and target practice. They elected Dr. A. C. Ware as their Captain; [illegible] believe, resolved to meet every Saturday. The following are the officers.

Dr. L. C. Ware, Captain.

Miss [? illegible] Nannie Morgan, First Lieutenant.

Mrs. [?illegible] Peter B. Heard, Second Lieutenant.

Miss [?illegible] Aley Smith, Third Lieutenant.

Miss [?illegible] Andelle Bull, First Sergeant.

Miss [?illegible] Augusta Hill, Second Sergeant.
Miss [?illegible] M. E. Colquitt, Third Sergeant.
Miss [?illegible] Pack Beall, First Corporal.
Miss [? illegible] Lelia Pullen, Second Corporal.
Miss [?illegible] Sallie Bull, Third Corporal.
Miss [?illegible] Ella Key, Treasurer.

[La Grange Reporter.

We commend the patriotism of these ladies, and hope, should occasion arise, they will [illegible] the patriotic virtues of their illustrious namesake. She had one quality, however, which [illegible] none of the La Grange heroines will [illegible] their duty to imitate. The historian of the Revolutionary period closes his account of [illegible] River Joan of Arc with the following [illegible] language: "Nancy was a jewel of a [illegible] but a d---l of a wife."

Bellville [TX] Countryman, June 12, 1861, p. 2, c. 4

Hurrah for the Ladies.—in Mississippi, and some other of the Confederate States, and even in some parts of Texas, the ladies are banding together for the purpose of drilling and practising [sic] the use of firearms, resolving, if necessary, to send the men off to fight, while they stay at home to protect their firesides from the incursions of hostile Indians or Abolitionists. At one or two places in Mississippi they have perfected themselves in the drill and manual of arms of the soldier, and declare their intention also to attend to the crops, while the males are away. This is PURE patriotism, and their action cannot be too highly lauded. We do not imagine the fair sex of our section behind any in their love of country, and should like to see such a movement set on foot. Who will put the ball in motion? Instances were common in our early history of the daring deeds performed by women, the heroic mothers of liberty. Though there may be no necessity the experiment can do no harm.

Austin State Gazette, June 22, 1861, p. 3, c. 3

The brave ladies of Carroll county, Kentucky, the residence of General William O. Butler, petitioned the legislature to furnish them with arms to defend the men and children, who were afraid to defend themselves.

Bellville [TX] Countryman, July 10, 1861, p. 2, c. 5-6

Capt. John Travis is drilling a class of ladies in pistol shooting, in Vicksburg, Miss., with much success.

Charleston Mercury, July 18, 1861, p. 1, c. 2

The Mississippi Women.--In Choctow [sic] County, Miss., a company of ladies has been organized for some time under the name of "Home Guards," numbering over one hundred. The Vicksburg Sun tells what they have done, as follows:

They have been constantly exercising on horseback and foot with pistol, shot gun, and rifle, and have attained such perfection that we doubt if there is a better drilled company in the country. Each one is almost a Boone with her rifle, and an Amazon in her equestrian skill. We have heard that one lady (our informant, Gen. T. C. McMackin, could not give us her name), in shooting at a cross mark, one hundred yards distant, with a rifle, struck the centre [sic] five times and broke it three times out of eight shots fired in succession. She had a rest. If any State can beat this, we should like to see it done.

Savannah [GA] Republican, July 19, 1861, p. 1, c. 2

The Mississippi Women.—In the Choctaw county, Miss., a company of ladies has been organized for some time under the name of "Home Guards," numbering over one hundred. The Vicksburg Sun tells us what they have done as follows:

They have been constantly exercising on horseback and on foot with pistol, shot gun and rifle, and have attained such perfection that we doubt if there is a better drilled company in the country. Each one is almost a Boone with her rifle, and an Amazon in her equestrian skill. We have heard that one lady, (our informant, Gen. T. C. McMackin, could not give us her name,) in shooting at a cross mark, one hundred yards distant, with a rifle, struck the centre [sic] five times and broke it three times out of eight shots fired in succession. She had a rest. If any State can beat this, we should like to see it done.

Augusta [GA] Chronicle & Sentinel, July 21, 1861, p. 2, c. 2

Female Heroines.--The Winchester (N.C.) Sentinel says:

Application has been made at this office to know whether there are any means, public or private, by which ladies can get hold of a sufficient number of light arms, such as repeaters or small rifles, suitable for the use of ladies. Some thirty or forty of these patriotic ladies in one of the adjoining counties have formed themselves into a company, and determined, if possible, to secure arms, and in the event of a necessity, to defend their homes and fight for the cause of liberty.

Dallas Herald, July 24, 1861, p. 1, c. 5

The Warren (Ark.) Home Guard says: A company of young ladies has been formed in our town. They drilled and marched around the square last Saturday, presenting a beautiful and military appearance.

Austin State Gazette, July 27, 1861, p. 2, c. 4

W. D. King is teaching the ladies of Cameron how to shoot the gun or pistol.

Austin State Gazette, July 27, 1861, p. 2, c. 3

We learn from Dr. W. E. Oakes, of Waco, that the young ladies have entered into an agreement to refuse associating with or countenancing any unmarried man who does not volunteer in the war. He also informs us that the ladies of the town and county hold regular shooting matches, and that some of them are fine shots. Dr. O. has recently been appointed surgeon in the Confederate army.

Bellville [TX] Countryman, July 31, 1861, p. 2, c. 4

Madam Rumor says the ladies of this neighborhood are going to form a company for the protection of such young men as will not volunteer to assist their country in gaining its independence.

One of the Mill Creek Guards.

Charleston Mercury, September 2, 1861, p. 4, c. 1

The ladies of Henderson, Rusk county, Texas, have formed a company of sixty-five strong, who practice target shooting every week, and are excellent markswomen. A similar company exists in Waco.

Dallas Herald, December 4, 1861, p. 2, c. 3

We understand that the young ladies of the "Eastern Texas Female College," of this place, have organized themselves into a military company, and are now undergoing regular drill—thus spending their hours of recreation. That's right, girls. The good opinion of her teachers, a good education, and finally the noblest and bravest soldier in the Confederate army for a husband, be the reward of the best drilled member of this company.—Tyler Reporter.

Natchez Daily Courier, April 1, 1862, p. 1, c. 2

Women in for the War. We find the following dispatch in the New Orleans True Delta of last Saturday evening. We publish it for the information of our readers:

Natchez, March 29. The girls, one hundred and three rank and file, each in herself a Joan of Arc or a Maid of Saragossa, have completed their military organization, and are in for the war. They will leave here by steamer for New Orleans on Monday morning. Give them a warm embrace. Hurra [sic] for Mississippi!

Charleston Mercury, April 2, 1862, p. 1, c. 6

A Good Example.--The following is an extract of a private letter from a lady, dated Aberdeen, Arkansas, February 20th. It says:

The ladies about here have all learned to shoot; last summer we had shooting matches regularly--rather masculine sport for ladies, think you, I reckon; but nevertheless we all learned, and thought the times would justify it, and some got to be very expert in loading and shooting. Would you believe that I can kill squirrels or birds on the top of tall trees? I keep a loaded gun in my room, also a pistol on a table near my bed every night, and, if necessary, would not hesitate to use them, and I hope never to have a use for them. Since the late requisition from the Governor every man seems most willing to respond to the call, both old and young, married and single.

Natchez Daily Courier, April 9, 1862, p. 2, c. 2

All Fool's Day. A large number of persons took a stroll yesterday afternoon on the steamboat landing, with the fond hope of witnessing the arrival of the young female Mississippi volunteers. But they saw nothing of the kind, though there were at that time on the levee many a Miss Volunteer of another sort. It was soon whispered in the crowd that they had been badly sold it being All Fool's Day, and then one by one they all retired, very much excited against the newspapers, and more particularly the True Delta, which published on Sunday, with a flaming heading, a telegram from Natchez, "from a respectable party," in which it was announced the girls would leave that place for this city on Monday. The female company turns out to be a military canard.--N. O. Bee, April 2.

Savannah [GA] Republican, April 12, 1862, p. 1, c. 2

The Women of Mississippi in Motion.—The New Orleans Delta publishes the following dispatch [sic], dated Natchez, March 29:

The girls, one hundred and three rank and file, each in herself a Joan of Arc or a Maid of Saragossa, have completed their military organization, and are in for the war. They will leave here by steamer for New Orleans on Monday morning.

Augusta [GA] Chronicle & Sentinel, April 30, 1862, p. 1, c. 3

"Secesh" Crinoline in Clarksville.--Notwithstanding the presence of the Lincoln soldiery in Clarksville, they have been unable to squeeze out the patriotism of the ladies of that city. A correspondent writes us as follows:

Secesh girls in Clarksville, Tenn., are conquered but not subdued; for they have, right under the very noses of their Yankee oppressors, formed themselves into a bona fida company, well drilled, which they call, very appropriately, and doubtless in derision of the well known feats of said oppressors, "The Rebel Masked Battery." They appear on the street frequently in complete Confederate uniform, which consists of rather a short grey dress, blue stripes down the sides, coat sleeves, blue cuffs, tight waists, with blue lappels [sic], standing collars, secession cravats, and the whole profusely trimmed with gold lace and brass buttons, ad infinitum. Turned up black hats with a long black feather in front, with a gold star and white buckskin gauntlets, complete the dress; deadly pistol and dagger; there are about seventy-five in the company. The Federals are on the qui vive to find out where the young ladies drill, but that they manage to conceal with woman's usual strategy. Hurrah, for the Clarksville girls.

We suggest that the Feds at Clarksville had

"Better let the girls alone."

Savannah [GA] Republican, May 2, 1862, p. 1, c. 4

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Memphis (Tenn.) Appeal, April 22d.